

Dear Chief Executive Lam,

We express our grave concern about the freedom of the press in Hong Kong. Since large scale demonstrations began in June 2019, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the Hong Kong Journalists Association (HKJA) have logged more than 30 complaints from journalists and media workers outlining violations of press freedom and freedom to undertake their work. ([Appendix I and II](#))

The IFJ and HKJA, together with the undersigned organisations from all over the world, call on Hong Kong's government to give stronger assurances that press freedom is protected in Hong Kong. We respectfully urge the Hong Kong Government to establish an independent committee to investigate these incidents and establish meaningful action and response to protecting press freedom and the safety of journalists.

Among the violations monitored are excessive force used by police, harassment of journalists, obstruction, physical and verbal assaults. Journalists also reported that police frequently used strong light to point at media workers and obstructed reporting.

The IFJ issued a [letter](#) to the Hong Kong Government in July to demand a response to a growing list of violations against the media during the current crisis. A reply was received on [August 19](#). Yet our considerable concerns for journalists' safety and press freedom remain. We also note that the government has put the responsibility of ensuring journalists' safety solely onto media workers by saying that "they should not stand too close" to the police. Despite this, our records and the cases of complaints received clearly show that some journalists were assaulted by police deliberately. In some cases, journalists were attempting to leave an area or there were no protesters near them at all when violations occurred. With all due respect, the Government's reply does not sufficiently address these clear cases of harassment and assault by the authorities to journalists and our concern cannot be eased.

The IFJ and HKJA have also observed that assaults of journalists are becoming more serious and frequent. During serious clashes between police and protesters on July 28, frontline reporters were fired with tear gas multiple times by police and some tear gas canisters exploded very close to them. A number of photojournalists were directly hit by the tear gas canisters and sustained injuries. During a police operation on the night of [August 5](#) in the Shum Shui Po area, police aimed tear gas from a high-rise building. A documentary journalism student was hit by a canister, causing severe bleeding from the head and subsequently fainted. Another journalist was arrested as he tried to protect the injured student journalist from further harm.

We remain extremely concerned about the recent spike in incidents in Hong Kong and condemn violence initiated by the authorities (particularly the police) on journalists, as well as the failure to ensure the safety of journalists and citizens at this critical time. These cases have seriously undermined press freedom in Hong Kong. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) has been ratified in Hong Kong and as such the Hong Kong government has a clear obligation to protect freedom of expression and press freedom.

We note that your government is still yet to give any formal or public response on these matters; nor has it addressed issues regarding the personal safety of journalists during recent protests.

Journalists play an integral role in any democratic society. Attacks against them must be taken very seriously and their attackers reprimanded, to ensure that press freedom and free speech cannot be silenced by a culture of impunity.

As Hong Kong's Chief Executive, you hold considerable power and opportunity to lead government and its authorities, to provide a response to the recent incidents outlined and to put a stop to a culture of impunity for crimes against journalists.

Sincerely,

International Federation of Journalists  
Hong Kong Journalists Association  
Sindicato dos Jornalistas, Portugal  
Federation of Spanish Journalists' Associations (FAPE)  
Nepal Press Union  
Federation of Media Employees Trade Unions, Sri Lanka  
Jharkhand Working Journalists Union, India  
Deutscher Journalisten-Verband e.V. Germany  
Union of Journalists in Finland  
Ghana Journalists Association  
National Writers Union, USA  
United Services Union (ver.di), Germany  
Indian Journalist Union  
Syndicat National des Journalistes, France  
Journalists Union of Assam, India  
Unifor, Canada  
Association of Taiwan Journalists  
Cambodia Association for Protection of Journalists  
E Tu, New Zealand  
Alliance of Independent Journalists, Indonesia  
Timor Leste Press Union  
National Nation of Journalists of the Philippines  
Free Media Movement, Sri Lanka  
Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists  
Karachi Union of Journalists  
Sri Lanka Working Journalists Association  
Association Luxembourgeoise des Journalistes Professionnels (ALJP)  
GPA-djp, Germany  
Journalists Association of Bhutan  
CWA Canada, The Media Union

SNPP/RDC  
Polish Journalists Association (SDP)  
Union of Cyprus Journalists  
Independent Media Trade Union of Ukraine (IMTUU)  
Federazione Nazionale della Stampa Italiana (Fnsi)  
Swedish Union of Journalists  
Associação de Imprensa em Português e Inglês de Macau  
Bytes4All  
Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain  
PEN Canada  
PEN America  
Norwegian PEN  
Initiative for Freedom of Expression – Turkey  
Vigilance for Democracy and the Civic State  
Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance – Australia  
SEAPA  
Media Institute of South Africa  
Media Watch Bangladesh  
Mediacentar Sarajevo  
CRNI  
CPJ  
IJC Moldova  
Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression  
ARTICLE 19  
The International Publishers Association  
Freedom Forum  
The Pacific Islands News Association

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Links to statements:

(Appendix I and II) [IFJ Monitoring of Hong Kong Protests - English](#)  
(Appendix I and II) [IFJ Monitoring of Hong Kong Protests - Chinese](#)  
[Hong Kong Journalists Association](#)  
[International Press Institute](#)  
[Committee to Protect Journalists](#)  
[Human Rights Watch](#)  
[Reporters Without Borders](#)